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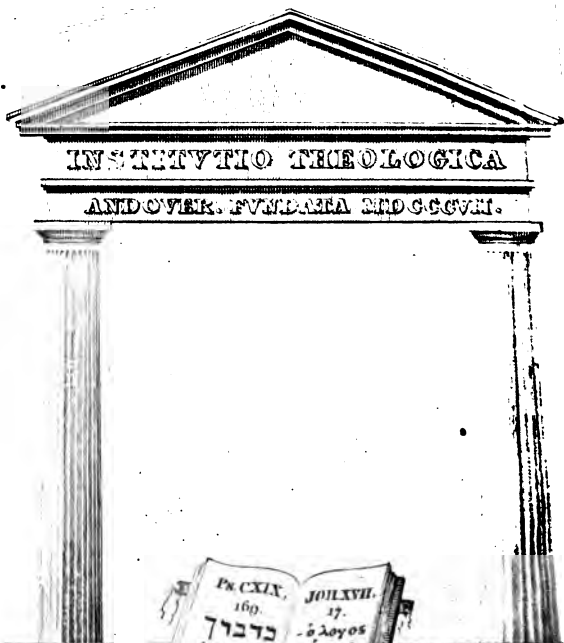
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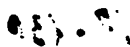
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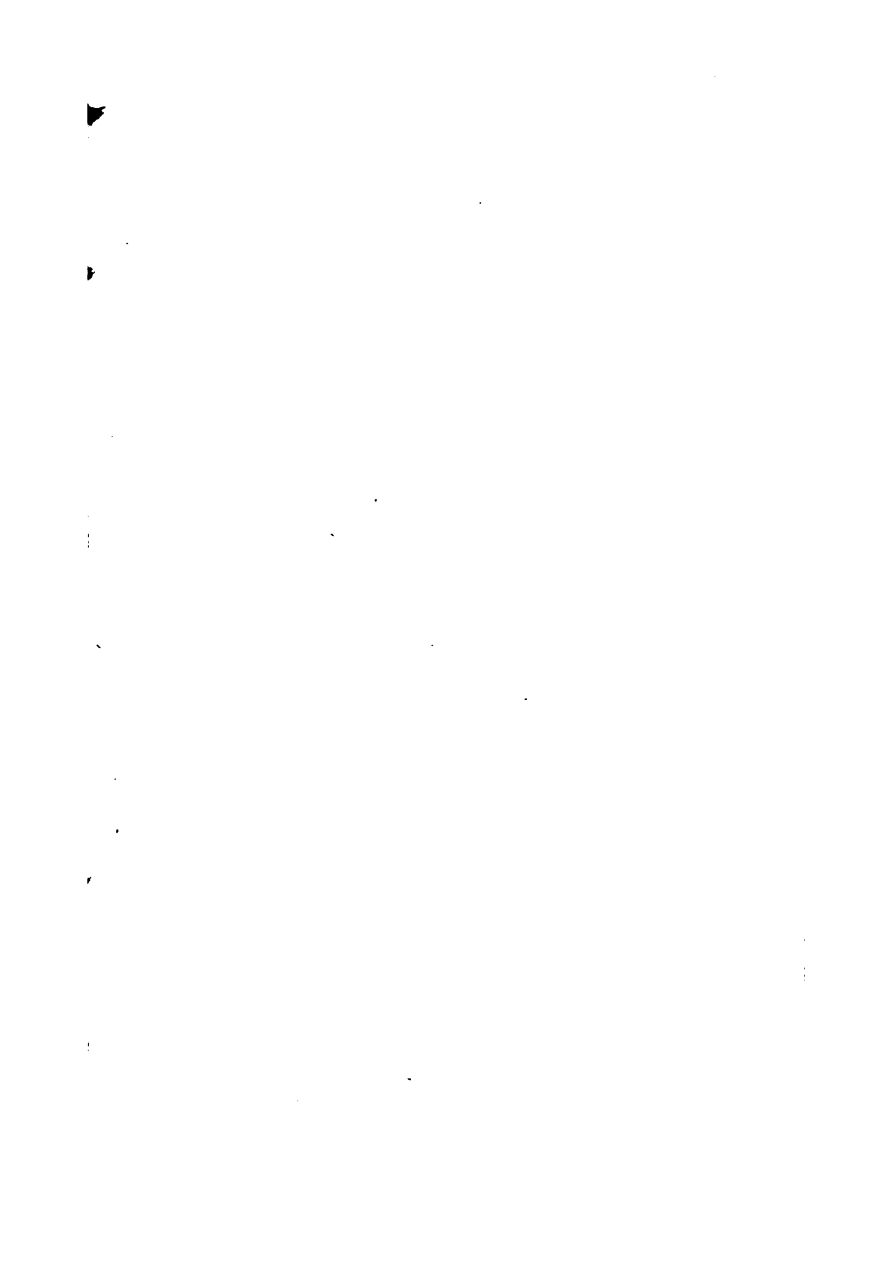
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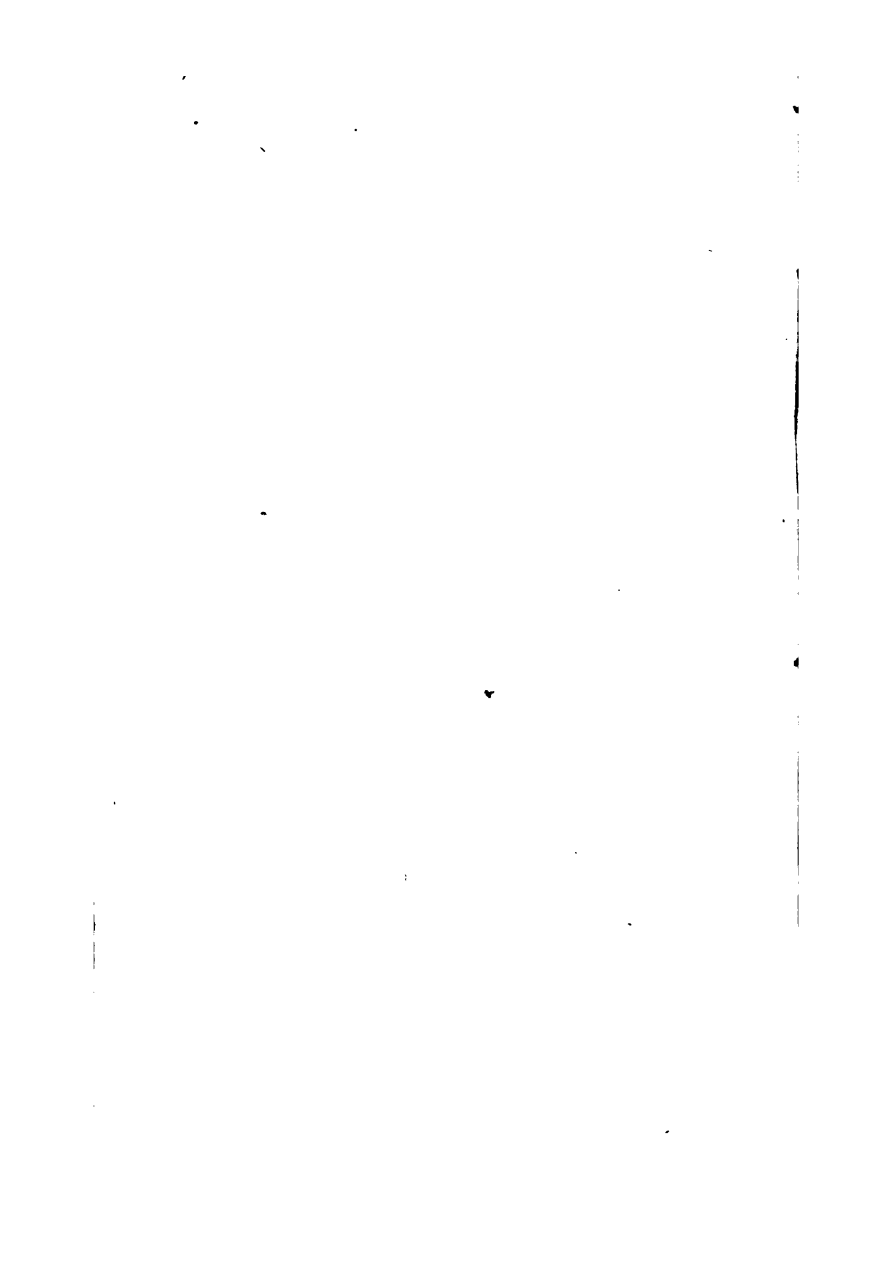


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**PRIZE**

**LETTERS TO STUDENTS.**

**IN TWO PARTS.**

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**By REV. BAXTER DICKINSON,**  
**NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.**

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## PRIZE LETTERS TO STUDENTS.

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### PART I.

IMPORTANCE OF A FIXED BELIEF IN THE  
DIVINE REVELATION, AND A CORDIAL  
RECEPTION OF ITS TRUTHS.

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### LETTER I.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I should need no apology for addressing you, even were there nothing peculiar in your case. Your *period of life* has always, of itself, awakened deep Christian solicitude. In common with other youth, you are fast forming characters for both time and eternity; and you are assailed by temptation in a thou-

sand forms, while perhaps unsuspecting of danger.

But there are circumstances which render youth engaged in a course of study, objects of very *peculiar* interest. You are blessed by Providence with special means of intellectual improvement, and special advantages for usefulness. Should you be spared to go forth into active life, you are to exert a controlling influence. All the great interests of the world are to be affected most seriously by the sentiments you imbibe, the habits you adopt, and the efforts you may put forth.

I would have you aspire to true greatness, usefulness, and happiness : and sure I am that the foundation of such a character must be laid in a cordial submission to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let me ask your attention, then, first, to a few thoughts showing **THE IMPORTANCE OF A DECIDED BELIEF IN THE DIVINE**

**AUTHORITY AND THE DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE.**

*If the Bible be true, it is a volume of unspeakable interest.*

One circumstance of interest is, that its truths are derived from a *Source infinitely lofty*. Other books are the productions of human genius. Their origin is marked by imperfection; and they are consequently to be received with caution. The Bible, if its claims are well founded, is from the Fountain of all knowledge. Its Author is a Being, whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting; who fills immensity with his presence; who seeth the end from the beginning. His character is that of absolute perfection. And, consequently, his declarations are to be received without any reserve. Though written by men, and at different periods, they are worthy of the same confidence as if they came direct from the Excellent Glory.

Another circumstance of interest is, that *the topics of which the Bible treats are of great moment.* It treats of the *Creation*, and gives a *history* of our race through a period of nearly four thousand years. It treats of *God*,—his nature, mode of existence, government, and designs. It treats of *man*,—his origin, ruin, dependence, duty, only way of recovery, and his final destiny. It treats of the infinite *Redeemer*,—his character, offices, and works. It treats of the almighty *Spirit*,—the Sanctifier, and blessed Comforter. It treats of *death*, a *resurrection*, a *judgment*, an eternal *heaven*, and an everlasting *hell*.

Where is the history of such amazing interest? Where are topics of such grandeur, glory, and awfulness? Viewed merely as a work of *curiosity* and *taste*, then, no volume is more adapted to arrest your attention, and to absorb your powers of feeling and research.

But the truths of the Bible contemplate a far nobler object than mere intellectual gratification. They seek your highest happiness through time and eternity. They are expressly designed to be "a light to your feet and a lamp to your path." The whole system is adapted to your circumstances, and has a direct bearing on your character and endless destiny. Such a system of religion, coming from such a source, demands surely a most solemn and candid consideration. You may question the declarations of a fellow-man, you may treat with indifference the opinions and counsels of a created mind ; but when *God* speaks, it becomes you to hearken, believe, and obey. You may even *trifle* where matters of little moment are concerned ; but not surely over a volume whose pages alone can guide to a city of glory. If the Bible is really of heavenly origin, no language can describe the importance of its

revelations. And in such circumstances it is utter *madness* to live undecided as to the validity of its claims, or the import of its disclosures. In a matter of such overwhelming moment, perplexity and doubt are wholly unbecoming.

## LETTER II.

IN urging a settled state of mind as to the origin and import of the Bible, I have gone upon the supposition that its claims are well founded.

Another consideration is, *that these claims and their supporting evidence have been long before the world.*

Prophets, Apostles, and Jesus Christ, all professed to teach under a commission from God; and they gave such evidence of divine authority as to demand fearlessly the confidence of mankind. The claims of some of the sacred writers have been before the world more than three thousand years; and those of Christ and his Apostles nearly two thousand.

It is, then, no novel subject on which you are called to make up a judgment ; no hasty decision to which you are pressed.

You know, too, that the claims of our religion have, at every period, excited great interest, and been most carefully and rigidly scrutinized. Infidelity has employed men of the brightest talents and most extensive learning. The attack upon revelation has been made in every variety of form, from the shrewdest sophistry, down to the most blasphemous scurrility. Where is the subject that has been longer and more fully discussed, or the occasion of deeper interest ?

If the Bible, then, has thus far triumphantly maintained its pretensions, there is no reason to apprehend they will ever be overthrown. The progress of time, continuing to develope the import of prophecy, and the purifying and ennobling influence of the Gospel, can operate only to confirm

the believer and to pour shame on infidelity.

If the desperate assaults of eighteen centuries have not destroyed the gospel or lessened its influence—assaults in which learning, wealth, and thrones have combined their powers—it is no enthusiasm to believe that it will survive all the malice of man, and triumph through the world. If the accumulating evidence of *three thousand years* cannot satisfy you that holy men have spoken by inspiration of God, I fear you have a spirit of unbelief which no reasonable evidence, and nothing but the fearful realities of judgment and eternity, can remove. You ask for some mightier genius to come up with novel and overwhelming testimony to the revelation of Jehovah. This is unreasonable.

The best powers of research, too, have, age after age, been employed to *elucidate*

the inspired text. And though future criticism may throw additional light on some passages, it cannot be expected to develop any radically new system of religious faith or practice.

The Bible, then, with its evidence and its doctrines, is now fairly before you: and you are justly urged to a decision upon both. Come to a decision without delay—a decision on which you can calmly risk eternal consequences.

### LETTER III.

It is an interesting circumstance that your character is now in a forming state. And the man of experience knows that it will be affected by nothing more seriously than by the religious views you adopt. In urging a rational and decided confidence in the revelation of God, then, I next observe,

*That an unsettled state of mind will be likely to degenerate to gross licentiousness of principle and practice.*

A character either of high excellence or extreme depravity is always formed by degrees. Moral principles, like the powers of the intellect and the body, have their infancy, growth, and maturity. The only infallible standard of character is the word

of God. Reason has but a limited range; and, besides, is liable to be biassed by passion and prejudice. Conscience often becomes perverted, and even torpid, so as to exert no proper influence.

The word of God, however, has its proper effect only when received with implicit cordiality. And it is interesting to witness its elevating power upon the youth who yields entire submission to its authority. It creates both purity and stability of character. It makes his progress in life one of uniform and growing worth as well as usefulness.

And it is affecting to see what depravity one may exhibit who has broken from the restraints of Revelation. Multitudes have abjured all the solemn obligations of Christianity. The great truths of the gospel have become the object of blasphemous contempt. The distinction between virtue and vice has been annihilated. Perhaps

a future state is denied, and even the being of God questioned. And in connection with this laxness of principle, appetite and passion have assumed dominion, and led to a course of most melancholy degradation.

And where did this fearful downward process commence? In most cases it can be traced to an unsettled state of mind as regards Revelation. The first link in the chain was a spirit of unbelief.

Does such a spirit lurk in your bosom? Perhaps you anticipate no danger. Perhaps you look with abhorrence upon the profligate, and shrink with pity or even horror from the impiety of the scorner. Perhaps parental fondness discerns only visions of honor, usefulness, and salvation before you. But rest assured that this spirit of skepticism is but the germ of a sour infidelity. It may be the first page

of a history that will carry only anguish to the heart of friendship, and throw a gloom over your being for both time and eternity.

#### LETTER IV.

THE object of your pursuit is happiness in the present as well as future life. The Tempter, I know, would persuade you that the religion of the Bible is adapted to inspire only gloom and anxiety. Though the suggestion be opposed by the experience of millions, it still accords with the bias of a natural heart; and you are in great danger from this delusion. In urging implicit confidence in God's revelation, then, let me next say,

*An unsettled state of mind is a most unhappy state.*

Suspense or indecision on *any* subject is unfavorable to enjoyment. But if the subject be one of great interest, it must

be very peculiarly so. And such surely is the subject of religion.

*Conscience* will not rest in connection with a doubting spirit. It never sanctions lax views of revelation, or of christian doctrine. It but reiterates the voice of God, which bids you *be rooted and grounded in the faith and established in the truth*. And often have its whispers or thunders of rebuke rendered the life of the skeptic one of uniform turmoil, anxiety, and wretchedness.

If, however, conscience can sometimes slumber in connection with a doubting spirit, you will find enough in the darkness which broods over the future to deprive you of peace. You can question the reality of Revelation, or the correctness of a fair exposition of the inspired text; but you cannot blot from your mind the impression of immortality and accountability. The inquiry will now and then

come home with power to your bosom,  
*Where shall I be, and what my condition,  
when this poor tabernacle is dissolved, and  
when worlds are dashing and consuming?*  
Often in your retirement the thought will intrude itself, that possibly the whole about which you are doubting is the exact truth of God; and your eye will spontaneously glance forward upon a cheerless eternity.

Must not reflections and misgivings like these exceedingly embitter your cup; strew thorns along your path, and plant them in your pillow? Your very *uncertainty*, in a matter of such moment, must be a source of painful anxiety. You are on a troublous sea, without pilot, or compass, or chart, and may soon be engulfed for ever.

Let not your religious faith, then, for a single month, remain unsettled. Acquire definite, clear, and established views, as to the authority of the Bible, and on

all the momentous topics of which it treats.  
*For, happy is the man that findeth wisdom,  
and the man that getteth understanding.  
The merchandise of it is better than the  
merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof  
than fine gold. Her ways are ways of  
pleasantry, and all her paths are peace.*

## LETTER V.

SUCH is your relation to the Most High, that you can rationally calculate upon happiness only as a result of his friendship. It is his prerogative to rule ; and that prerogative he can never relinquish. He claims authority, not only over the walk and conversation, but also over the powers of the mind. Hence it becomes you to inquire habitually, whether your religious views and feelings, as well as deportment, accord with his will. As a motive to a cordial acquiescence in the authority of the Bible, then, let me remind you,

*That an unsettled state of mind is highly displeasing to God.*

He has given you his word in a spirit of boundless benevolence. With this revelation he has sent the proper evidence of its divinity. He has caused its leading truths to be written as with sunbeams. And the whole he has given you in a form which he saw best adapted to your necessities and capacities.

And can he be pleased with that temper of distrust, which divests the Bible of its lofty character, or rejects any portion of it? Can he be satisfied to have his own testimony called in question, and that, too, by one who is of yesterday and knows comparatively nothing? Rest assured, he speaks to be heard, to be respected, and to be obeyed.

The question is not, whether you are *sincere* in your religious faith. Millions have been sincere in their adherence to the absurd systems of idolatry. But has this sincerity given them favor with God?

Thousands have been sincere in their rejection of the Bible, and in their attempts, by sophistry, wit, and ridicule, to prostrate the Christian cause. But has their *sincerity* secured for them the divine complacency? "Go ye," said our Lord, "and preach the gospel to every creature; he that *believeth* shall be *saved*, and he that *believeth not* shall be *damned*." Here is developed, by the Judge of all, another criterion of trial for the last day, than sincerity. Here are seen to hang the immortal destinies of a world, upon the reception given to the claims and the truths of Christianity. God demands that his message, sent in mercy, and fully substantiated, shall be received with cordiality. He cannot allow you to trifle with his goodness, or to question his veracity. He cannot allow you to sit in judgment on his sublime and glorious revelations.

## LETTER VI.

THOUGH the life of man is a vapor that soon passeth away, he is prone to live as if this were his permanent abode. The infatuation is displayed by old and young. Perhaps it is displayed by yourselves. This heedlessness of the future comports not, surely, with your nature and destiny. And to break up the delusion and lead you to act for immortality is the object of Revelation. As another reason for fixed confidence in the authority of the Bible, then, let it be remembered,

*That an unsettled state of mind will prevent all serious attention to the concerns of the soul.*

The influence of the Gospel, as a means

of salvation, will be proportionate to the confidence with which it is received. A firm belief in its truths is always preliminary in the business of personal religion. Such *faith* gives to the Bible its legitimate power upon the heart and conscience. Without it, there is no adequate motive to anxiety and action. Such faith at once arrests attention; for if conscious that the voice of the *Eternal* is breaking on the ear, you cannot but listen. Such faith at once overwhelms with a sense of ruin.

On the other hand, do you doubt whether the Bible be in truth from God?—or whether its momentous doctrines be correctly stated? This doubting is the impenetrable shield to ward off every arrow of conviction. It must prevent your being alarmed and humbled at the faithful picture of your depravity. It must prevent your being duly affected,

in view of your dependence on God, and of his coming judgment. It divests God's character and government of their power to awe. It disrobes heaven of its glories and hell of its horrors. You must have full *faith*, to be affected by the exhibitions of God's book. And the danger is, that your doubtings will fix upon you the sleep of the second death. I see in your skepticism the precursor only of increased hardness of heart, and endless exclusion from the presence of God. "He did not many mighty works there, *because of their unbelief.*"

And now, my final consideration on this point is,

*That no religion is genuine, but that which is based upon a fixed belief of Gospel truth.*

The Gospel is the Holy Spirit's great instrument. It is only through this, that he quickens and purifies the dead in sin.

You may embrace other views of religion; you may adopt another standard of character, and another criterion of future judgment; and cherish hopes of salvation. But the foundation of those hopes is rotten; and, consequently, such hopes must sink. Religious error can never produce holiness. The sanctifying Spirit will never operate through such instrumentality. He works by means of the *truth*. One of the first results of his special influence is to enlighten the *understanding*, and to rectify the *judgment* and *conscience*, on the momentous topics of salvation. Does the heart of the proud *infidel* sometimes yield to his influence, and resolve to live for God? Never does the plant of righteousness spring up, till his infidelity is dissolved—till his spirit is borne down with the full conviction that the tremendous revelations of the Bible are all true. Does an apparent conversion occur in connection with

erroneous views of religion? It generally shows itself to be spurious by a speedy apostacy; and it cannot abide the judgment of the last day.

Weigh, then, my young friends, the claims and the doctrines of the Bible. Ponder them, till they are fixed immovably, not only on your conscience and judgment, but also in your *heart*. It is a matter of infinitely more moment to you, than any light of time can disclose. It is a matter to bear upon your welfare myriads of ages after the luminaries of heaven are extinguished. Open your eye to the evidence of God's revelation, and to the infinite value of its truths. Yield up your judgment, your heart, and all your powers to its influence. Fashion your character for immortality upon its unchangeable principles. *For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.*

## LETTER VII.

THAT fixedness of belief which has been urged in the foregoing pages is only a *preparation* for receiving the grace of God in truth and love. "The devils also believe and tremble." Their understandings and consciences are fully on the side of truth. But that faith which is saving has its seat in the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Here is a distinction of infinite moment. See to it, then, that you have this faith, "without which it is impossible to please God."

It is characterized, first, by *lively interest in the truths of the Bible*.

On this point David has expressed the feelings of every true believer: "*Oh, how*

*love I thy law ! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word."*

True faith is characterized also by *habitual and cheerful obedience to the precepts of the Bible.*

"What doth it profit, though a man say he hath *faith*, and have not *works* ?" "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" This union of faith and obedience has been illustrated in the entire history of the saints. It gave dignity to the character of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, and the Prophets; of whom the world was not worthy; "who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were

made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." It gave dignity to the character of apostles and martyrs; whom no threats and no torture could divert from the path of Christian integrity. With calmness, but with firmness, they could say, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" was the *first* and the *uniform* question of the believing Paul.

Another characteristic of true faith is *full confidence in Christ for pardon and salvation.*

The great errand on which he came from heaven was "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*" "Neither is there salvation in any other." "I," said he, "am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And the spontaneous language of all real believers is, "Lo, this is our God, we have

waited for him; we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation." They look upon their own righteousness as "filthy rags." They regard the atonement of Christ as the only basis of hope. They "glory in the cross of Christ." And with filial confidence they "commit to him the keeping of their souls." The gospel message found them under sentence of condemnation, oppressed with a conviction of guilt and helplessness; and the sum of that message was *Christ crucified*, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, "*Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.*" And this message from the throne of mercy they have received with confidence and inexpressible gratitude.

I remark, again, that true faith is characterized by *a habit of acting under the influence of "things unseen and eternal."*

The views of the irreligious are limited to this world. Here are their grand objects of pursuit. Here are their leading motives of action. They pant for wealth, and power, and pleasure, and the homage of dying men. You would judge from their conduct, that they were either calculating to live here always, or indulging the dream that death is an eternal sleep.

It is far otherwise with the man of evangelical faith. It is the very *nature* of his religion to be swayed by considerations drawn from the eternal world; to seek the honor that cometh from above; and to grasp after durable riches. "Now faith is the *substance of things hoped for*, the evidence of things not seen." "But *our* conversation is in *heaven*." "For we walk by faith, not by *sight*." "While we look not at the things which are *seen*, but at the things which are *not seen*." "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal

life." "Behold," said the first Christian martyr, under the enrapturing visions of true faith, "behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The sinner looks upon eternity as distant. The Christian looks upon it as near. The sinner closes his eye alike against its glories and its horrors—he shuts his ear against its songs and its wailings. The believer forms his plans and goes to his pursuits, habitually admitting those scenes as sober realities, and applying their proper influence to his heart and conscience.

Such are some of the leading features of gospel faith. And this faith is the very essence of Christian character. It is a bond of union to Christ, that neither life nor death, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, can sunder. It is far other than a cold philosophical admission of well substantiated truth. It

is a warm, deep, practical principle of the heart. Let it reign within you, and it will inspire reverence for God, give courage in peril, and lift you to the dignity of acting habitually in the true spirit of an immortal.

### LETTER VIII.

IF familiar with the word of God, you must be aware that a life of Christian faith is abundantly urged as an imperious *duty*. The obligation rests upon you at every stage of life. It results alike from the authority and the love of God. And his claim to your *immediate* affection, confidence, and service, is *reasonable*.

Immediate entrance on a life of faith is urged, first, *by a due regard for the condescension and kindness of the adorable Savior*.

He was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He was "before all things, and by him all things consist." Of him it was

said in heaven, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Yet "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

The example of condescension has no parallel. Well might the angels look with amazement; and well might the earth tremble, the rocks be rent, the slumbers of the dead be broken, and the sun be darkened, when such a Being appeared on the cross!

The sacrifice was made, too, for a world in *rebellion*, as well as suffering. "Greater love hath no *man* than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friend*; but God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet *enemies*, Christ died for us." "Thou hast received gifts for men—yea, for the *rebellious* also." Nor

have his condescending regards ever ceased for one moment. "He ever liveth to make intercession." And in the calls of his Gospel, the strivings of his Spirit, and the admonitions of his providence, he unremittingly displays the tenderest concern for the guilty.

The appeal from the cross is addressed to all the generous feelings of the heart: it is addressed with the most touching emphasis to your *gratitude*. And it must be a hard heart, indeed, that is not dissolved by such benevolence. Forget the hand that rescued you from sudden death; forget the friend that raised you to wealth and honor; forget a mother's love; but never the matchless love of Christ. Yield to its influence, give him your heart, receive his yoke, and count it bliss to aid his triumphs.

A life of Christian faith is urged also by a *proper regard to your own highest interests*.

You are candidates for eternal life; and

it is the arrangement of God, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;" "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The provisions of the gospel thus throw upon you a tremendous responsibility. Well did the Savior say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." Well did an apostle ask, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "If they that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" Indeed, "he that believeth not is condemned already." Wealth, fame, and pleasure you may acquire without submission to Christ. But what are

they to the dying sinner? What a character of madness does death fix on one who has "turned away from him that speaketh from heaven!" The homage of millions might then embalm your ashes, and yet your soul be in agony, and pant only for annihilation. "For when a man dieth, he shall carry nothing away with him; his glory shall not descend after him." But "this shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow. Wherefore give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains."

Let me remind you, too, that, from your standing in society, *the character and destiny of multitudes must be affected by your example.*

Among those of corresponding rank, the silent influence of example is very great. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall

be destroyed." But many circumstances are adapted to augment this influence. And among these are intellectual attainments. So that much in proportion to your success, as men of learning, will be the weight of your example on the community. A highly cultivated mind is ever regarded with reverence. Your literary advantages are destined, then, to give peculiar importance to your sentiments and habits. If, standing on the hill of science, you are seen to reject Christ, multitudes below may be expected to "despise, and wonder, and perish." With a lofty intellect, and an infidel heart, you may send a moral pestilence through states and kingdoms—you may infect millions with the poison of the second death. There have been those whose literary pre-eminence drew upon them the homage of the world; but whose influence was all directed against the kingdom of Christ:

and they would now give millions of worlds, if they had them, could they blot from the universe the mischief they have done.

Others of loftiest intellect have sat at the feet of Jesus, and consecrated their talents to his service; and they have gone with a bright train to heaven. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus palsied for a time the arm of persecution. And, in modern times, the conversion and decided piety of a distinguished man has, in not a few instances, given a shock to the infidelity, and pride, and fashion of thousands, and rung a note of thunder on the consciences of tens of thousands in humbler life. "*Have any of the Rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*" is a question often asked with trembling interest.

Your speedy and decided piety, then, may be of unutterable importance to others. Already is your example operating silently

to give shape to the character and destiny of some with whom you have associated in scenes of childhood and youth. And, as you advance, its influence will of necessity be continually extending. Responsibilities are thus coming upon you of tremendous magnitude, from which you cannot escape. Thrice happy will it be, both for yourself and others, if your talents and stores of knowledge are all sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and your example and efforts such as to guide multitudes to the Savior.

## LETTER IX.

POSSIBLY you acknowledge the *duty* of an immediate cordial submission to Christ. Possibly you admit the *importance* of a life of faith, as regards your own happiness and that of others. And yet you feel, perhaps, a strong reluctance to entering *immediately* on such a life. The convenient time has not come. Obstacles crowd upon your view.

One obstacle may be, that religion would interfere with some *worldly enjoyments and prospects*.

It is true "you cannot serve God and Mammon." You cannot carry to the standard of Christ a heart enslaved to

pleasure, gain, or ambition. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." The self-denial, however, is only in the outset—only *momentary*. Let the holy purpose be once fixed, to renounce every unworthy object, to "forsake the foolish and live," to act for God and eternity, and your disposition—your *taste*—is *changed*. Former sources of happiness will seem insignificant, because others unspeakably richer are now opened. New objects of pursuit will awaken all the interest and energy of which your nature is capable. Religion leads "into green pastures, and beside the still waters," and, at the same time, to fields of noblest enterprise and action. It gives scope for the highest efforts of genius, and learning, and taste. It is not true, then, that, even as regards your prospects for time, religion will occasion any *important* sacrifice. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having

promise of the *life that now is*, and also of that which is to come."

Do you look upon a life of faith as *gloomy*? The idea is a delusion. It is opposed by the experience of millions. Who was ever known to regret that he gave his heart to God, and vowed allegiance to Christ? The only regret ever heard on this point is, that the claims of the gospel have been too long neglected. A proud *infidelity* has often been heard in death to pour forth loud laments on a review of past folly. It has sported with the gospel and the believer's hopes: but "in laughter the heart has been sick, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." A "dreadful sound has been in the ear"—a sound admonishing of guilt and wrath; and an opening grave has scattered all delusion, and introduced a scene of endless weeping and wo. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

On the other hand, it is the very nature of true religion to produce cheerfulness. "Great peace have they that love thy law." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." And why should not the believer be cheerful? He has peace with God, peace of conscience, and pledges in reference to his immortality, of infinitely higher value than temporal thrones and kingdoms.

But another objection to a life of faith may be the fear that religion would *hinder your literary progress*.

Your anxiety is groundless. Genuine piety exerts only a purifying and elevating influence. It subdues the passions, regulates the habits, clears the intellect from prejudice and low desire; and at the same time presents the most powerful motives to intellectual exertion. History records

most striking examples of literary eminence associated with piety. Before you decline a life of godliness, through fear of injuring your mind, you must blot from the annals of literature and religion such names as BACON, and NEWTON, and LOCKE, and HALE, and JOHNSON, and others of like character that have illumined the world.

But perhaps the most formidable obstacle to entrance on a life of piety is a *false shame*, denominated in Scripture "the fear of man."

Admitting that you must lose the good opinion of some, and incur their contempt, what then? Reason, conscience, and Revelation still urge, "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall consume them like wool." What madness to start back from a man that

shall die! Rather be consistent and bold before men, while humble before God, and you shall possess your soul in peace; for conscience, and God, and all the wise and good in heaven and earth, will approve. And in the end, when "the *fearful* and unbelieving" shall have their part in the burning lake, there remaineth for you "an exceeding great reward." Yes, when the slaves of earth shall be loaded with chains of darkness for ever, you shall walk in the eternal light and liberty of the sons of God.

Be ashamed, then, only of cowardice and sin. Fear none but God. Dare, like earthly conquerors, to take a stand from which you cannot go back. They do it for a corruptible crown, but you an incorruptible. Victory will be easier than you anticipate. Difficulties at once retire before a mind resolved to act worthy of its high destiny. Cherish, then, the lofty

sentiment which seeks only the honor that cometh from above; which counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; which aspires only to pour blessings on a perishing world, and to sit down at last with the Redeemer on his throne.

Do you now ask how you are to attain this fixed and living faith? I answer, *Be daily familiar with the word of God—Be habitual in prayer for the Holy Spirit's influence—Be unwavering in the purpose to do the will of God as soon as you know it.* Says the great author of the Christian faith, "If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The great source of

unbelief is a guilty estrangement from God and his pure word. It was the impious boast of *Paine*, that, when he commenced writing against the sacred Scriptures, he "*had neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though writing against both!*" And *Johnson*, the great English critic and moralist, had the sagacity to remark, that infidels generally were *ignorant* of the Bible. Let any one sit down with the unalterable determination to *know* its contents, and to be *obedient* to the truth, and he will soon discover such purity, sublimity, and perfect adaptation to man's character and wants, as will satisfy him that the whole is from heaven. Let him only review, without prejudice, the miracles, the holy life, the heavenly doctrines, the wonderful death, the triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he will exclaim, "*Truly this was the Son of God.*"

## **PART II.**

### **IMPORTANCE OF AN ELEVATED RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.**

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#### **LETTER I.**

**MY YOUNG FRIENDS,**

If you have been "born of the Spirit," it may reasonably be expected that you will "mind the things of the Spirit;" and thus continually "grow in grace." Those who possess your peculiar advantages and prospects, should be the last to be satisfied with merely being "babes in Christ." It is your privilege, as well as duty, to aspire to "the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus." The motives to such high and holy aspirations are abundant.

First; Eminent piety *effectually suppresses those appetites and passions that are destructive.*

There is in human nature a tendency to sensual indulgence, and to pursuits selfish and unworthy. The very *child* exhibits this propensity; and no youth, familiar with his heart, can fail to be humbled and alarmed in view of the strength of this propensity.

Too often it becomes, even in early life, the controlling principle; reducing the man with all his nobler powers to a complete and ignoble vassalage. Humanity weeps over the wreck of character, life, and soul, produced by these wayward principles of our nature.

The only infallible remedy for the disease is Christian piety. The great *springs* of moral action are disordered; and to *them* especially the gospel applies its correcting influence. It claims authority over the

very thoughts and feelings ; while all other influence reaches only to the external man.

In proportion as true religion gains ascendancy, the irregularities of appetite and passion are effectually suppressed. Let it have entire empire, and temptation may assail in vain : the youth and the man of years alike are secure. Is the Christian characterized by near communion with God, and a panting desire to advance the divine glory ? Is the eternal law graven on his heart, and his eye fixed on heaven ? He has risen to a holy eminence, from which he looks down in pity or disgust upon the pursuits of the ambitious, the gay, and the worldly, as well as the grosser indulgences of the sensualist.

Again ; *Eminent piety harmonizes and concentrates all the useful faculties.*

One of the effects of sin has been to occasion an ever-raging conflict between the powers of the soul. On one side are

the affections, and on the other the judgment and conscience. And it was in view of this warfare that revelation declared, "The wicked are like the troubled *sea* when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The sinner's affections lead him to forsake and forget God, and cleave to the world as his portion. They would blind his eyes to the true dignity of his nature, and the grandeur of his destiny. They bid him secure his own advancement, whatever other interests of the universe may be sacrificed. But his judgment and conscience bring in other decisions, and point to a far different course of life. They proclaim the folly as well as guilt of his selfish, or vicious, or vain pursuits, and thunder an alarm in reference to the future.

The human mind was not designed to be the theatre of such conflicts. It was formed to exhibit, and it may be made

to exhibit a combination of powers, all harmonious in their operations, and all conspiring to ennoble and bless the individual through everlasting ages. And the influence that can allay the tumult, and harmonize the discordant elements, is found in the gospel and grace of God, and no where else. One of the very first effects of genuine religion is to produce *peace*. And the more entire its dominion, the more perfect is the tranquillity of the soul.

By thus harmonizing the faculties, and bringing them to act in unison, religion also imparts *energy* to the character. Do the affections, conscience, judgment, all concentrate on a single object?—action is easy, prompt, and efficient. The man has courage, firmness, patience, and fortitude. And, possibly, the world has often found occasion to look with astonishment upon the boldness and splendor of his achieve-

ments. You may have *genius*, you may have *knowledge*, and still be disqualified for all great and noble action. And it is affecting to see how often a lofty intellect has been debased, and perverted, and embarrassed in all its operations, by a heart under the dominion of sin. Let divine grace break away those bonds of corruption, and bring the powers of the man to act in concert, and there is dignity imparted to his character, and boldness and efficiency characterize his efforts. You mistake, if you suppose that genuine religion has any other effect than to quicken and exalt, as well as purify, every faculty of the soul.

## LETTER II.

RELIGION would manifestly demand your first attention, were its influence expended in simply imparting peace to your own mind, and purity and elevation to your character. But the gospel contemplates you as sustaining important relations to other intelligent beings—capable alike of receiving and communicating happiness. And from these relations you derive an impressive motive to the cultivation of elevated godliness.

*Eminent piety gives pleasure to all virtuous beholders.*

It exhibits substantially the same features at every period of life; but it has

peculiar attractions in *youth*. It is viewed with satisfaction by the affectionate *parent*. He knows that it shields from temptation, raises to true honor, gives promise of usefulness, and secures the benediction of the Most High. It is viewed with interest by a virtuous *community*; for it is known to be the basis of social as well as individual happiness. It occasions pleasure to the very *noblest* of the intelligent creation. "*Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*" It is viewed with indescribable satisfaction even by the *Eternal*. It is the very character which his precepts, and gospel, and Spirit, conspire to create; and it assimilates the creature of his power to Himself. Such high moral excellence, I know, has no charms for the eye of infidels, profligates, and devils. *They* would have you annihilate the authority of conscience

and Revelation, blot out every impression of immortality, and submit to the empire of inclination. You can give *such* beings pleasure only by cherishing their spirit, entering into their ignoble designs, and sharing in their fearful doom.

The motive urged bids you cultivate a kind regard for the happiness of the *virtuous* universe. Show that you have ambition to give pleasure to the good, by "fleeing youthful lusts," by receiving the eternal law as your rule of life, by resorting to the cross for cleansing and pardon, and by an unreserved surrender of all your powers to the service of your Maker.

Connected with this, another weighty consideration is—Eminent piety *secures the confidence of mankind.*

The basis of all real confidence is a character of integrity and benevolence. And the more marked such a character, the more full will be the confidence it

inspires. This character it is the province of evangelical religion to create. It was displayed in its full glory by the great *Author* of the Christian system. It is inculcated by the whole weight of precept found on the sacred pages. It is a direct result of the operations of the Holy Spirit. In a cordial and unreserved submission to the gospel, man has principles of action that are fixed and pure. By these principles he will abide, *through evil as well as good report*. His habitual inquiry is, not what will secure his own ease, emolument, power, or glory; but what is *right*, and what will advance the honor of Jehovah and the welfare of mankind.

And it is interesting to witness the spontaneous and general homage that is paid to this high moral excellence. Who occupies a large space in the affections of his fellow-men, and is entrusted with power where great interests are at stake?

Who sinks in death amid the tears and regrets of an extended community? Who lives in the grateful recollections of posterity, though no proud monument marks the place of his repose? Is it the slave of appetite and passion? Is it the man of splendid fortune whose *gold* is his *god*? Is it one who has pushed his way to empire to gratify a sordid ambition, and whose history is but a record of pride, oppression, and blood? Is it the madman with whom the Bible is a fiction, the religion of prophets, apostles, and martyrs, a delusion, and all future retribution but the dream of an enthusiast? Is it not rather the man of unbending integrity and expanded benevolence?—the man who has inflexibly adhered to the dictates of conscience and Revelation through scenes of severe trial?—the man whose powers have all been concentrated on the lofty object of lifting up a world from gross darkness and corruption to purity and heaven?

Would you, then, acquire the *confidence* of your fellow-men? You cannot too soon have a character fashioned upon the principles of the New Testament. You cannot rise *too high* above all that is vain, vicious, and selfish, in our nature.

The present is the *forming period* as regards your standing for life. Let sobriety and benevolence mark your deportment, and you shall rise to an enviable place in the esteem and confidence of others; while many a son of fashion and pride, who has gloried in his freedom from the restraints of religion, shall sink to neglect and infamy. The experience of ages has sanctioned the testimony of Revelation, that "*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come.*"

To these considerations, let me add, *Eminent piety ensures the divine blessing.*

*"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and*

*he shall direct thy paths. They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Because he hath set his love upon thee, therefore thou shalt never be moved. Them that honor me I will honor. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."*

These are but a specimen of God's pledges to his devoted people. They give interest to almost every page of the inspired volume. They are adapted to all the variety of circumstances into which man can possibly be cast. And the experience of thousands, from age to age, has borne testimony to the faithfulness of Him who hath promised. *Noah* he saved from the dread doom of a guilty world. *Lot* he delivered, when the clouds of his wrath burst in fire upon the plain. *Elijah*, in peril and hunger, he sent ravens to feed. *Daniel* he rescued from the mouth of lions,

and from the intrigues of those worse than lions, and raised him to govern in the proudest kingdom of the world. *Peter*, and *Paul*, and *Silas*, he delivered from prison, to the confusion of their enemies. To *martyrs* he gave such tokens of friendship as caused them to sing of victory, even upon the rack and at the stake.

Not only has he been the refuge of his people in trouble, he has imparted wisdom to their counsels, and energy to their efforts, and triumph to their enterprises. Through his blessing a little one has chased a thousand, and a small one subdued a strong nation. Do you covet the esteem of the *good*, and the favor of the *great*? There is One whose friendship has a value above that of the universe beside. "For if *God* be *for* us, who *can* be *against* us?" Secure *his* friendship, by a devout, consistent, decided piety, and his omnipotence is pledged for your safety and happiness. He may

not give you *wealth*, but he will bestow the treasures of his grace. He may not exempt you from *trial*, but he will cause all things to work together for your good ; "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, may be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee." They that trust in him are secure. For sooner will he dash the sun from the heavens, than suffer any of the true interests of his people to be sacrificed. His love to them is an *everlasting* love.

### LETTER III.

You are now at a period of life and in circumstances fraught with pleasing anticipations. The world is before you as a theatre of action. And the very *object*, indeed, of your literary toils is to qualify you to give direction to the affairs of mankind. It is an error, however, if you suppose that the treasures of science are all that is demanded to secure for you distinction among men. In still urging the cultivation of a high religious character, let me say, then, that

Eminent piety *will increase your power ;  
and that of the best kind.*

It has ever been an object of ambition

with man to gain ascendancy over his fellow-men. In pursuit of this object, he has struggled for knowledge, for wealth, for office. And, by such means, he has *partially* realized the fulfilment of his desires. He has swayed the opinions, and directed the movements, and, perhaps, received the hosannas of the multitude.

Power thus sought and acquired is, however, always to be dreaded. Too often it has been used only for purposes of self-aggrandizement, or of mischief.

But while the gospel reprobates a sordid worldly ambition, the *mere desire of influence* it does not discountenance. It is a principle of our nature which religion sanctifies, and consecrates to a benevolent use. And it is this sanctified power at which you are commanded to aim ;—power to expose error, to subdue prejudice, to scatter light, to awaken, and concentrate, and direct the energies of those around

you, for the accomplishment of objects truly desirable. And this power an elevated godliness can hardly fail to impart.

Does eminent piety suppress the corrupt appetites and passions? Does it harmonize and concentrate all the useful faculties? Does it secure the confidence of mankind, the bad as well as good? Does it ensure the blessing of Almighty God?—How then can it operate otherwise than to augment your power? What, but circumstances like these, brought forth Peter, the disciple, from obscurity, and rendered him the intrepid and successful champion of the Christian cause? What, but circumstances like these, gave such grandeur to the movements of the great apostle of the Gentiles? What, but circumstances like these, enabled Luther, (once a poor boy that sang in the streets for his bread,) to withstand the vengeance of popes and emperors, and to give new light and life to the moral world?

These are but examples of the power which religion imparts. It despises not a cultivated intellect, wealth, or station; for it presses them all into its holy service. But it can act—and act with a mighty energy—without any extraordinary secular advantages. Let the church have her primitive union, spirituality, self-denial, and zeal; and no combinations of infidelity, and vice, and delusion, could stand before her influence; every dark place of corruption on the globe might soon rejoice in the splendor of her achievements. And the power which elevated piety would impart to the church, it may impart to yourselves individually.

Are you blessed with peculiar advantages for mental cultivation? And do you look forward to situations peculiarly favorable for influencing mankind? These circumstances may give you power. But an elevated religious character would greatly augment that power, and render it

all power of the best kind. Which leads me to say, that,

*The present condition of the moral and political world calls for eminent piety.*

I need not remind you of the familiar fact, that provinces and kingdoms are famishing for the bread of life, and are dependent, under God, upon the church for supplies. It is a standing, but still a melting, appeal to your sympathies. I need not remind you of the vast and well-known facilities which the ingenuity and enterprise of man are giving to the present generation for scattering the light of salvation over the earth. There are other circumstances which give to the present period unutterable interest. It is a period of *excitement* and of *conflict*. A murmur of discontent is heard among the nations. The foundations of despotism are breaking up; and the civil power seems to be fast passing into the hands of the multitude.

The *religious* world, too, is in a state of peculiar interest. While the Spirit of the Most High is descending on the churches, and Immanuel's cause is strengthening, the efforts and achievements of benevolence are watched with a jealous eye by the enemies of God, and are becoming the occasion of a united onset upon the kingdom of truth and righteousness. Infidelity is uttering her blasphemies—vice is displaying her haggard visage—the man of sin is quickening his emissaries to delude and enchain—and, possibly, this generation may yet be summoned to conflict in “the battle of the great day of God Almighty.”

The tempest will pass by; but in what state it will leave the world is a fearful uncertainty. A *few years* will display results of deepest interest to the patriot and the philanthropist. The spirit of revolution may degenerate to a frantic licentiousness, and become a tide of

corruption which shall bury for ever the dearest interests of millions.

At such a period it becomes not the sons of the church to slumber. They need that vigilance which can descry danger at a distance—that self-denial which can sacrifice any thing to the safety and honor of the Christian cause—and that faith which derives courage from the eternal promise in the darkest hour. If it be a crisis with the church, there are demanded spirits of a high order to direct, under God, her destinies. And where is the youth that pants for higher glory than the honor of contributing to preserve her altars and spread her triumphs?

Consider, too, *you are giving character to coming generations.*

The image of the parent is impressed upon the child; and very often it is recognised through successive generations of his posterity. By this general law of

Providence each age gives character to that which succeeds.

This fact is one of peculiarly solemn interest to the youth of this land. Is our country to have a population of fifty millions, while many of you are yet active upon the stage? Is this population to swell, within the compass of a century, to two hundred millions; and, in less than two centuries, to surpass the present entire population of the globe? And is the character of this mighty mass of human beings to be fixed in no small degree by the present generation? And can you count it a matter of little consequence what sentiments you imbibe, and what practices you adopt, and what influence you throw around you?

Think, too, of the amazing resources of your country, and of the influence she must exert two centuries hence over the destinies of the world. And reflect, that

you are now giving character to that mighty influence.

I tremble in view of the responsibilities which rest upon the youth of this land, and especially upon those of cultivated mind. God has attached to their existence an importance incomparably surpassing that of any other equal portion of the human family. He is giving them the power pre-eminently to bless or to scourge the world. And the alternative is one from the responsibilities of which they cannot escape. Oh, if you will grow up to a manhood of mere fashion, of vice, of worldliness, of low ambition—if you will pass through life without God, and die without hope—better that your abode were in some obscure island of the sea, or some region of the north locked in eternal winter, or some desert scorched by a vertical sun, than in this *garden of the creation*. Are you heedless of your high

obligations—having only a name to live? I hear a voice from generations yet unborn, loud as thunder, forewarning you of a dreadful retribution.

I would hope, however, you may imbibe the true spirit, and bring yourselves to be habitually swayed by the maxims of the gospel. I would hope you may display the grand features of Christian piety in such prominence as to impress them deeply on those who come after. I would hope you may aspire to the dignity of leaving, when you ascend to heaven, an influence which shall give light, purity, and salvation, to future millions. No age, no spot in creation, has presented greater advantages for high Christian effort. And the youth of mind or wealth, who shall catch the spirit of *Howard*, of *Edwards*, of *Wilberforce*, may now fix an image upon the world as fair and indelible as theirs.

## LETTER IV.

THE motives I have suggested to the cultivation of true and elevated godliness, have a more special reference to your character, and condition, and usefulness, in this life. I would have you ever remember that a character is to be formed for *eternity* as well as time. I would have you form the purpose, and acquire the habit, of acting for *immortality*. And, as a candidate for heaven, you are solemnly urged by revelation to make "your calling and election *sure*." To this end you need an elevated godliness. Let me, then, incite you to this by the consideration, that

*The higher your attainments in piety*

*here, the higher will be your glory and blessedness hereafter.*

Scripture abundantly substantiates the idea of gradation in the future condition of the saints ; and the doctrine readily commends itself to our reason. "*One star differeth from another star in glory.*" "*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament—they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*" "*Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.*"

The gradation will be fixed, not according to the *intellect* of the saved, but according to their *moral excellence*. The passages cited allude to special distinction in heaven ; and they allude, too, to special sacrifices and efforts in the service of God. The inheritance of the redeemed is not, indeed, bestowed as a matter of *merit* on their part ; still it is bestowed as, in a sense, a *reward*.

The idea is not to be admitted, that one who devotes his youth and the vigor of life to the service of sin, and consecrates a bare remnant to God, will receive the same testimony of divine approbation as another, whose earliest and best days were given to his Maker. The idea cannot be admitted, that the Christian who has just religion enough to escape the formal censure of the church, will receive, from the Infinite Judge, as high approbation as another who identifies the welfare of Zion and the honor of Christ with his highest joy. While the salvation of one is like the escape of a mariner from a sinking wreck, that of the other is an "*open and abundant* entrance" into the kingdom of his Lord. Such spirits as *Enoch*, and *Elijah*, and *Samuel*, and *David*, and *Daniel*, and *Paul*, may rise as high in glory and bliss above the common rank of the redeemed, as

themselves are surpassed by *cherubim* and *seraphim*.

We urge to the cultivation of a high religious character, then, from its important bearing on your future standing. Are you sluggish, tame, compromising, little more than a cipher in the household of faith?—you sacrifice comfort and honor *here*; but you make an incomparably more serious sacrifice of honor and joy *hereafter*. It is a sacrifice stretching onward through everlasting ages.

On the other hand, *your labor in the Lord shall not be in vain*. The record of your spirituality shall be opened at the judgment. It shall be displayed to the universe. It shall call forth marked expressions of approbation from the enthroned Lamb. It shall be the basis, *through grace*, of your high rank in the kingdom of your Father. Suffer me to

hope, then, that religion will not press her momentous claims upon you in vain. She imparts only purity, energy, and dignity to the character. She pledges to you the power of pouring blessings upon the world. She will crown your immortality with honor. Review the annals of the world; and point me to the men whose glory is to be coveted. Avarice has hoarded her splendid fortunes. Ambition has gathered her laurels; and the illusions of an hour have drawn forth the envy of rivals, and the homage and the acclamations of the multitude. But the illusion has vanished, and the glory has departed; and what seemed a lofty pre-eminence has sunk to "shame and everlasting contempt." Religion, too, has had *her* votaries—men who have "walked with God"—men who have lifted a voice of power in the cause of humanity and salvation—men who have sacrificed treasure and life upon the altar

of their piety. *Their greatness* was based upon their *goodness*. And *they* are destined to live in the choicest records of earth through time, as well as in heaven's book of everlasting remembrance.

*Cherish, then, my young friends, a vigorous faith.* It is *this* principle, which has been at the foundation of all that real excellence on which the eye lights with such interest, as it wanders back upon the history of our race. This gives fortitude, patience, and zeal. It creates grandeur of aim, stability of purpose, and promptitude of action. It stamps insignificance upon all that an unholy heart covets, and opens visions of glory beyond the grave.

Cherish then, I say, a *vigorous faith*;—that faith which receives every truth from the Bible as if the very voice of the Eternal were breaking on the ear; which will habitually give to your existence here the solemn reality of a probation for

eternity; which will spread around you, habitually, scenes tremendous as a falling universe, an opening judgment, an everlasting heaven, an eternal hell. *This* is the principle which can check all mad enthusiasm for the world—which can inspire burning zeal for the conversion of sinners—which can give dignity to holiness—render you tranquil and steadfast in every duty—and cause you to sing of victory even while death is impending over you.

Will you, then, cherish a vigorous faith? Will you aspire to a character of eminent piety? Will you make it an object of holy ambition to leave on earth some traces of your existence—some imperishable memorials of your worth? Will you now resolve in God's strength, not just to escape hell and enter heaven, but to "come off more than conquerors," and to start with the foremost and the strongest on the everlasting race?

## **LETTER V.**

**IN** the foregoing pages eminent piety has been recommended chiefly as a means of your own happiness and that of others. And it would seem that such motives might have upon cultivated minds a commanding influence. To seek your own happiness, in objects truly worthy and enduring, is right. And it is honorable, as well as right, to aim at pouring extended blessings on mankind. But there is still another motive to eminent piety infinitely more important—**THE GLORY OF GOD.** Amid all your aspirings this should never be forgotten. Nay, by the true Christian it can never be forgotten.

And to the man of truly enlarged views it presents an object of pursuit, a motive to action, which stamps with absolute *meanness* all the pursuits of mere worldly ambition.

The glory of God is promoted just so far as his real character is made known, and his government honored. Hence, obviously, you may advance his glory by *reflecting his image and obeying his precepts*. And you honor him just in proportion as you reverence his will, and exhibit his likeness. You thus honor his *law*, which seeks the purity and order of the universe;—you honor his *truth*, that great instrument of sanctification;—you honor his *Spirit*, that almighty agent in assimilating man to his Maker;—you honor his whole glorious scheme of mercy, which brings from the “horrible pit,” and fashions from the rudest materials, pillars for his heavenly temple. Bright examples

of piety draw homage even from the ungodly—they show religion to be of divine origin, and thus bring honor to him to whom it is due. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and *glorify your Father* who is in heaven.” “Many shall see it, and *fear*, and *trust in the Lord*.” “The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, *when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes*.”

Thus, by a holy example and untiring effort, you may induce multitudes to give up rebellion and declare allegiance to Jehovah. Who can estimate the vast numbers rescued from sin, to the praise and glory of God, by such spirits as Paul, and Luther, and Baxter, and Edwards, and Whitfield? But these, remember, were men of like passions with yourselves. And in many respects you have far greater facilities than they had for influencing mankind and bringing honor to God.

Would you now, if you could, blot out for ever all the glory they have secured to his throne? Would you at once change it all to rebellion and blasphemy? You cannot do this. But you *can* do what is more than equivalent to all this. You *can*, God permitting, *withhold* from him that greater revenue of praise, which he now commands you to go and bring up to his throne from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue. Let me say, then, precious youth, Tremble for your responsibilities ;—awake to righteousness ;—put on the whole armor of God ;—so live, that at last you may join with innumerable multitudes, swayed by your influence, not in cursing and blasphemy, but in giving glory to the Lord your God, and to the Lamb, for ever.

END.





